

## Cubby

Cubby, ye're a bonny bord. Mild, an' ower-soft,  
Wallerin' doon the ooze wi' yer sea-byet feet,  
Broon as an' aa'd dopper. Are ye no feart,  
Rowellin' about the lippers or amang folks?

That much at hyem about the wears, ye've disappeart,  
Yer heed's a wadge, yer neb's a fid, ye sneuk an plodge  
Amang the bents, a heap a barky gear  
Bidin' quiet. Wheer's yer man? Awa'.

Ah but in May, daddin' like corky dookas –  
Thorty-strang, an' aa' the bonny bairns  
Thrustletoon-soft an' sooty, aa't'githor,  
Iverybody's business – ye're a hyell village.

The *Cubby* or *Cuddy Duck* is the Northumbrian name for the eider, said to be named after St Cuthbert who protected it. The female ducks raise their ducklings communally, without the drakes.

Eider, you're a beautiful bird. Mild, and too gentle,  
Waddling down the mud with your sea-boot feet,  
Brown as an old oil-skin. Are you not frightened,  
Rolling upon the waves or among people?

So much at home among seaweed, you've  
disappeared,  
Your head's a wedge, your bill's a splicing pin, you nose  
about and wade  
Among the sea-grass, a heap of fishing gear tanned  
brown with bark (as it was in the past),  
Remaining quiet. Where's your male partner? Gone.

Ah but in May, bobbing like cork fishing floats,  
Thirty-strong, and all the pretty children  
Thistledown-soft and sooty, all together,  
Everybody's business – you're a whole village.

